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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 000506

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY PLEASE PASS TO WILLIAM KILMARTIN AND
STEPHANIE CLARKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/06/2019

TAGS: [IT](#) [PGOV](#) [ETRD](#) [PBTS](#) [PTER](#) [PARM](#)

SUBJECT: MEGAPORTS IN ITALY: DETECTING NUCLEAR MATERIALS
AMIDST THE MAFIA, PART 1.

REF: 08 NAPLES 36

Classified By: CDA Elizabeth Dibble for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (SBU) Summary: The DOE Megaports program seeks to protect the United States from attack by placing radiation detectors in container ports. Italy has long been on the Department of Energy's list of desired Megaports participants, but efforts to institute the program in Italy stalled several years ago. Italy's role as site of Gioia Tauro, Europe's busiest transshipment port, and the reality of organized crime involvement in the ports, combined with the success of the USG's Container Security Initiative (CSI) in Italy, mean Italy continues to be a logical participant in the program. This cable endeavors to explain the need for Megaports in Italy. Septel will attempt to illuminate the challenges in establishment of the program and will seek guidance and assistance in coordinating a USG strategy to reignite Megaport negotiations with the Government of Italy. End Summary

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Megaports Background
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12. (U) Megaports is a Department of Energy (DOE) program that provides passive radiation detection equipment, communications systems, training and technical support to partner countries to help them prevent the global container shipping system from being used to transport illicit nuclear materials, a nuclear weapon or a radiological dispersal device. Greece, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands already have operational Megaports programs, and Megaports is currently being implemented in Portugal as well.

13. (U) In 2004 the DOE presented the Italian government with a draft Megaports Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would allow the installation of drive-through radiological detectors at Italy's major ports. The effort stalled at that time, and since then there has been little movement on Megaports in Italy. Since 2003, however, the Department of Homeland Security's Container Security Initiative has been operational in Italy. The Megaports issue was revisited in 2006, but did not result in a signed MOU.

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WHY SHOULD ITALY BE A PART OF MEGAPORTS?
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Busy Ports and Good Cooperation:
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14. (U) The number of containers passing through Italian ports

and the extraordinary cooperation with Italian officials already working with the CSI program make Italy a logical and important country to have on board this non-proliferation program. Megaports is seen as being complementary to the Container Security Initiative. CSI is already successfully operating at five Italian ports, and the DOE is highly interested in having Italy participate in the Megaports program. The ports identified by the DOE to be Megaports are La Spezia, Genoa, Livorno, and Gioia Tauro, all of which are CSI ports.

15. (U) Thousands of shipments headed for the United States pass through Italy's ports each year. In FY 2008 in Naples, 19,031 bills of lading for shipments to the US. were examined by CSI officials; in Gioia Tauro 40,466; in Livorno, 123,000; in La Spezia, 133,000; in Genoa 91,039. CSI personnel are already actively screening these US-bound shipments, but Megaports would add an important additional layer of security, as Megaports' goal is to scan as many containers as possible, regardless of destination. Efforts are also made to scan containers in transshipment. Gioia Tauro in particular would benefit, as it is Europe's busiest transshipment port with around 3 million containers passing through each year. Cooperation with Italian customs officials is highly praised by those involved in CSI, leading us to believe cooperation with Megaports would also be strong once the initial hurdles of implementation were overcome. Megaports would also put Italy in a position to be ahead of the game in preparing for the looming USG requirement of scanning 100 percent of containers entering the U.S., which is currently required by U.S. law by 2012.

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Organized crime means security vulnerabilities:

16. (C) The existence in Italy of strong organized crime syndicates with pervasive influence leaves Italy with a significant proliferation security gap. Organized crime involvement in the Port of Gioia Tauro in southern Calabria for example, is an open secret. The CSI team leader in Gioia Tauro confirms that it is a given that the port is Mafia-run. That Mafia threats hang in the air is evidenced also in the fact that Italian customs officials at this port are at times reluctant to go on record as blocking a shipment for CSI investigation, preferring instead that the Guardia di Finanza, an armed law enforcement service, be associated with the blockings. "There are eyes everywhere in the port," the CSI team leader told us recently.

17. (C) Recently, two major shipping companies transferred operations from Gioia Tauro to a port in the north of Italy. Delay in processing of containers was the reason given by one of the companies, but some suspect the desire to avoid paying mob kickbacks may be the real reason. In reftel, ConGen Naples reported that despite strict security measures, the port is a drug entry point and has also been used in illegal arms transport. This points to officials being willing to look the other way while illegal activities are being conducted. A mob-controlled port so easily used as a drug and arms entry point is vulnerable to becoming an entry point for other dangerous materials.

18. (SBU) Port and customs employees are also vulnerable targets for threats and for bribery. In recent months two Italian customs agents working with the CSI program at the port of Gioia Tauro have been relocated due to such threats: One was shot at and another received a threatening message and two bullets delivered to his home. An investigation is ongoing, but DHS colleagues speculate that they were likely doing their jobs too well and were thus targeted by the 'Ndrangheta organized crime syndicate. Another vulnerability is the fact that Customs and Guardia di Finanza agents are not well paid. Last year, customs agents in Genoa were arrested for taking relatively small kickbacks. (Comment:

Given the particular security concerns in Southern Italy, we recommend that DOE reevaluate the chosen ports and also consider designating Naples a Megaports port. End Comment)

¶9. (SBU) Despite shortcomings, CSI personnel say the program is operating well in Italy and they praise the cooperation of Italian counterparts. Nevertheless, Megaports would permit authorities to add another layer of protection, helping to close all too apparent security vulnerabilities.

¶10. (U) Part II of this cable details the challenges we face in our efforts to bring Megaports to Italy.

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